

Remarks

In this Amendment and Response, claims 4 and 11 have been cancelled, and claims 9 and 25 have been amended. No new matter has been added, with the amendments to the claims fully supported by the specification, claims and drawings as originally filed. Claims 1 to 3, 5 to 10, 12 to 15, 18 and 22 to 26 remain pending in the present application. Applicants respectfully request reexamination and reconsideration of the present application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Procedural Rejections

In the subject matter, the Examiner objected to the drawings under 37 CFR §1.83(a) as not showing features recited in claims 4, 11 and 24. Claims 4 and 11 have been cancelled. Claim 24 has been amended to remove the reference to a continuous face. Withdrawal of the objection to the drawings is requested.

The Examiner objected to claim 9 for an informality. Claim 9 has been amended to correct the repeated word. Withdrawal of the objection to claim 9 is requested.

The Examiner rejected claim 26 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to provide antecedent basis for a recited element. This rejection is respectfully traversed. Claim 26 has been amended to depend from claim 25, which provides proper antecedent basis for the recited element. Applicants submit that claim 26 as amended is in condition for allowance.

Applicants note that the foregoing amendments were not made to overcome the art based rejection. Accordingly, such amendments should not be construed in a limiting manner.

Substantive Rejections

At paragraph 8 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 9 to 11 and 22 to 25 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by Dareing, U.S. Patent No. 4,225,270. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 9, as amended, recites in part a restraint device comprising a pair of restraint faces laterally spaced apart to receive a length of an elongate structure therebetween. Each restraint face is configured to operate along and control curvature of the length of the elongate structure

during lateral deflection of the section. Each restraint face also provides for lateral movement of the length of the elongate structure within the restraint.

The Examiner cites Dareing as disclosing a pair of restraint means or faces which are spaced apart to receive a length of an elongate structure. However, the restraint means or faces 31 disclosed in Dareing are longitudinally spaced apart from each other along the length of the elongate structure or flowline 22. In contrast, the pair of restraint faces recited in claim 9 are laterally spaced apart and the length of elongate structure is received between the two faces. There is no disclosure within Dareing that the restraints means, namely alignment funnel 19 and sleeves 31, provide any control of curvature of the elongate structure. With regard to funnel 19, there is a separate element, namely, cable 27 which provides a bowing or curving of elongate structure 22 prior to insertion of structure 22 within the funnel 19. However, it is clear that funnel 19 is not intended to control curvature if the structure must be preshaped prior to insertion within the funnel. As shown and described in Dareing, it appears that funnel 19 is intended to align a leading portion of flowline 22 for connection of the flowline to an underwater connection point of an offshore drilling installation (col. 3, lines 4 to 14).

For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claim 9 is not anticipated by the cited prior art and that claim 9 is in condition for immediate allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claims 10 and 11 depend from and further limit claim 9. For the same reasons stated above with regard to claim 9, Applicants submit that claims 10 and 11 are not anticipated by the cited prior art and that claims 10 and 11 are in condition for immediate allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claim 22 recites in part a stabilization system for a section of a submarine elongate structure, the stabilization system including a restraint for limiting the lateral movement of the elongate structure. The restraint includes two restraint means laterally spaced apart so as to be arranged to allow the pipeline to extend therebetween. Each of the restraint means is configured to allow lateral movement of the elongate structure proximate the restraint means, during which lateral movement the restraint means controls curvature of the elongate structure by impressing a characteristic curvature of the restraint means therealong.

As noted above with regard to claim 9, the restraint means or faces 31 disclosed in Dareing are longitudinally spaced apart from each other along the length of the elongate structure

or flowline 22. Further, there is no disclosure within Dareing that any of the restraint devices provides any manner of limiting the curvature of the elongate structure to a characteristic curve. Neither funnel 19 nor sleeve 31 is indicated as including any shape other than linear. Funnel 19 is shown with a flat sided conical entry and sleeves 31 are shown with flat parallel sides. There is no disclosure that either of these restraint means provides a curvature control function or feature at all.

For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claim 22 is not anticipated by the cited prior art and that claim 22 is in condition for immediate allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claims 23 to 25 depend from and further limit claim 22. For the same reasons stated above with regard to claim 22, Applicants submit that claims 23 to 25 are not anticipated by the cited prior art and that claims 23 to 25 are in condition for immediate allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner indicated that claims 1 to 8, 15, and 18 were allowed, that claims 12 to 14 included allowable subject matter but depended from a rejected base claim, and that claim 26 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the cited informality. Applicants acknowledge the allowance of the claims 1 to 8, 15, and 18.

Claims 12 to 14 depend from claim 9, which has been amended and discussed above. Applicants submit that claim 9 is now in condition for allowance and that claims 12 to 14 are also in condition for allowance.

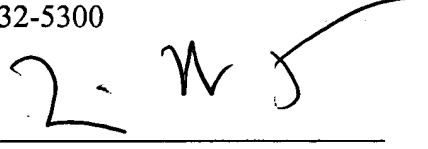
Claim 26 has been amended to correct the informality and Applicants submit that claim 26 is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner has any questions regarding this Amendment and Response, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' representative Brian H. Batzli at 612.336.4755.

Respectfully submitted,

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